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1963/10/21

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EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

October 21, 1963

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. BUNDY

SUBJECT: Nhu's Interview in TIMES of Vietnam

I attach FBIS 06 on an interview with Counselor Nhu published in the government controlled press of Vietnam on Saturday. It is obviously addressed to us, and I think the President would be interested in it.

You will note that I have marked a passage on the second page where Nhu is trying to thrust responsibility for deciding whether the UN team should see Tri Quang on us. A cable has gone out to the Embassy telling them that we want the reverse to happen.

The UN team is due to arrive next Wednesday the 23rd and stay approximately two weeks. The question has arisen whether we wish to have Lodge out there for the entire two weeks, in which case he would not be free to come back to Washington until the end of the week November 4-9. My inclination is that it is probably more important for him to come here soon in view of the growing political effects of our aid cut off (see page 6 of today's CIB). If he left Saigon on Wednesday next (October 30th), he would be here at the end of that week or for the week end and would have spent a week in Saigon while the UN team was there. I have a cable coming over from State for clearance suggesting some dates to Lodge.

Mike
Michael V. Forrestal

Att.

P.S. I'd like to talk with you [illegible] this [illegible].

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FBIS 06

INTERVIEW WITH NGO DINH NHU

SAIGON THE TIMES OF VIETNAM IN ENGLISH 19 OCT 63 S

(PRESS SCRUTINY)

NHU ON UNITED STATES)

(BRACKETS AND ELLIPSES AS PUBLISHED)

(TEXT) POLITICAL COUNSELOR NGO DINH NHU SAID THURSDAY THAT THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE HAVE LOST THEIR CONFIDENCE IN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. THE COUNSELLOR MADE THE STATEMENT IN AN INTERVIEW WITH VISITING FOREIGN NEWSMEN. HE SAID HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THE UNITED STATES HAS "INITIATED A PROCESS OF DISINTEGRATION AT A TIME WHEN WE ARE WINNING, PEOPLE HERE ARE WONDERING WHAT THE UNITED STATES IS DOING. THERE IS AN ATMOSPHERE AT DISTRUST. PEOPLE HAVE LOST CONFIDENCE IN THE UNITED STATES."

HE SAID: "WHETHER IT IS UNDER THIS GOVERNMENT OR UNDER SOME OTHER GOVERNMENT, THE CONFIDENCE BETWEEN THE VIETNAMESE PEOPLE AND THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN LOST."

HE SAID THAT ARRESTED BUDDHIST LEADERS CLAIMED "A HALF DOZEN" U.S. INTELLIGENCE AGENCY AGENTS AND EMPOLOYEES OF AMERICAN "CIVILIAN" AGENCIES IN VIETNAM HAD URGED THEM TO STAGE A COUP D'ETAT AND HAD INCITED BUDDHISTS TO COMMIT SUICIDE. "SOME OF THE BONZES (BUDDHIST PRIESTS) IN DETENTION HAVE FREELY REVEALED THAT SOME CIA AGENTS ENCOURAGED THEM. THEIR STORIES CHECK SO WELL THAT THEY CANNOT BE UNTRUE. THE BONZES HAVE NAMED A HALF DOZEN CIA AGENTS PLUS SOME OTHER EMPLOYEES OF AMERICAN CIVILIAN GOVERNMENT AGENCIES HERE. SOME OF THESE PEOPLE ARE STILL HERE. SOME HAVE GONE. DAY AND NIGHT THEY URGED THE BONZES TO STAGE A COUP AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT," THE COUNSELOR TOLD NEWSMEN.

HE SAID HE COULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHY THESE CIA AGENTS GOT INVOLVED IN THE BUDDHIST AFFAIR SINCE HE AND THE CIA OFFICIALS HAD BEEN WORKING MARVELLOUSLY TOGETHER IN WHAT MANY HAVE TERMED THE "WINNING PROGRAM"--THE STRATEGIC HAMLET PROGRAM--AND THAT MCCONE HIMSELF HAD UNDERSTOOD THE NEED AND MEANING OF THAT PROGRAM. "I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER THEY HAD RECEIVED INSTRUCTIONS FROM THEIR HIGHER-UPS, BUT I MUST SAY THAT UNITL THIS BUDDHIST AFFAIR BROKE OUT, THE CIA HAD PLAYED AN IMPORTANT PART IN MAKING THIS WINNING PROGRAM A SUCCESS," HE SAID.

ASKED WHY THESE CIA AGENTS WORKED AGAINST HIM, COUNSELOR NHU SAID: "I DO NOT KNOW. MAYBE THEY HAD RECEIVED ORDERS TO DO IT AGAINST THEIR WILL AND JUDGMENT." THESE AGENTS WERE NOT FROM THE ARMY, HE EMPHASIZED.

HE TOLD THE CORRESPONDENTS: "THE TRUST WHICH HAS EXISTED BETWEEN VIETNAM AND AMERICA HAS CEASED TO EXIST NOW. THIS IS TRUE ALSO OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE WHOLE OF THE UNDERDEVELOPED WORLD. FOR US IN VIETNAM, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO GO UP THE HILL AGAIN (AN APPARENT REFERENCE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF IMPROVEMENT IN U.S.-VIETNAMESE RELATIONS IN THE FUTURE). THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT WILL NEED MUCH WISDOM TO RECOVER FROM WHAT HAS BEEN DONE IN THE PAST FEW MONTHS. I DO NOT SEE WHAT U.S. POLICY IS AT THIS STAGE."

(MORE)

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FBIS 07

ONLY ADD 06 (INTERVIEW WITH NGO DINH NHU)

X X X AT THIS STAGE.

(TEXT) COUNSELOR NHU REFERRED TO THESE TROUBLES AS "THIS WHOLE MESS IN VIETNAM," AND SAID AMERICAN PUBLIC OPINION APPEARED TO BE TRYING TO MAKE "SCAPEGOATS" OUT OF HIMSELF AND THE CIA FOR IT.

THE COUNSELOR POINTED OUT IN THE INTERVIEW THAT AN ABRUPT, SHARP CUT IN U.S. AID TO VIETNAM WOULD HAVE GRAVE CONSEQUENCES IN THE ECONOMY AS WELL AS IN THE MILITARY EFFORT, ESPECIALLY IF SUCH A CUT IS DECIDED UNILATERALLY. "TO ME, AID SHOULD BE REDUCED PROGRESSIVELY AND BY AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS. THIS IS SOMETHING TO BE EXPECTED BECAUSE AMERICAN AID TO US IS SOMETHING THAT CANNOT GO ON FOREVER," HE SAID.

ANY SUDDEN REDUCTION OF AID WOULD PLACE THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT IN SUCH A POSITION AS TO BE FORCED TO MAKE DEEP AND DRASTIC CHANGES, STRONGER MEASURES TO MORE QUICKLY BRING ABOUT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, CURB PRIVILEGES, AND PROMOTE MORE SOCIAL JUSTICE, HE EXPLAINED. SUCH A DRASTIC POLICY WOULD INVOLVE CHANGING EVERYTHING, HE ADDED.

HE SAID HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHY, SINCE THE U.S. AID NORMALLY RELEASES FUNDS IN ADVANCE WITHOUT WAITING FOR CONGRESSIONAL APPROVAL, IT NOW IS WAITING FOR CONGRESS TO APPROVE SUCH FUNDS. "THERE ARE TWO MAIN EFFECTS SO FAR," THE COUNSELOR SAID." THE FIRST ONE IS TO COMPEL THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT TO USE ITS RESERVES OF FOREIGN CURRENCIES AND THE SECOND IS TO BRING ABOUT BLACK MARKET AND ITS CONSEQUENCES. THAT LEADS TO A POISONING OF THE SITUATION AND NO DOUBT BRINGS ITS ADVERSE EFFECTS TO THE WAR EFFORT...."

NOW IF FOR ONE REASON OR ANOTHER THIS AID IS REDUCED, WE SHALL HAVE TO DO WHAT THE COMMUNISTS HAVE DONE. THE COUNSELOR ALSO REFERRED TO THE SOLUTION OF ALGERIA, WHICH HAS BEEN NATIONALIZING MAJOR INDUSTRIES, NHU SAID HE PERSONALLY BELIEVED THE SYSTEM OF U.S. AID HERE SHOULD BE CHANGED TO A LEND-LEASE TYPE WHEREBY THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT WOULD REPAY THE UNITED STATES FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND OTHER NECESSITIES. "IT (THE LEND-LEASE TYPE PROGRAM) WOULD PRESERVE OUR DIGNITY AND MAKE US MORE CONSCIOUS OF OUR OBLIGATION."

HE ADDED: "THE OTHER ADVANTAGE WOULD BE THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT BE MORALLY INVOLVED IN THE SITUATION." HE ALSO SAID THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM LAOS HAD FRIGHTENED NATIONALIST OPPONENTS OF THE VIETNAMESE AND CONVINCED THEM TO COOPERATE WITH THE GOVERNMENT IN FIGHTING THE COMMUNISTS. "I DO NOT THINK U.S. POLICY IS TO WITHDRAW FROM VIETNAM AS FROM LAOS, BUT I DETECT A WAVERING," THE COUNSELOR SAID.

ASKED WHETHER THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT WOULD OBJECT TO THE U.N. FACT-FINDING MISSION TALKING PRIVATELY WITH THE "BONZES" BEING HELD AT THE U.S. EMBASSY, THE COUNSELLOR REPLIED THAT, FIRST OF ALL, THAT WOULD BE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE U.S. EMBASSY. "THE RESPONSIBILITY RESTS WITH THE UNITED STATES. THIS RESPONSIBILITY WE DON'T WANT THE UNITED STATES TO THROW ON US. WE WANT THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT TO TAKE THE FULL RESPONSIBILITY IN THIS CASE," HE SAID.

ASKED IF THE VIETNAMESE GOVERNMENT WOULD PRESENT EVIDENCE OF CIA INVOLVEMENT IN THE BUDDHIST AFFAIR TO THE U.N. FACT-FINDING TEAM, THE COUNSELOR SAID THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL DO EVERYTHING IT CAN TOO AVOID WASHING DIRTY LINEN BETWEEN AMERICAN AND VIETNAM IN PUBLIC, UNLESS "THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT DECIDES TO KILL US THROUGH THE INTERMEDIARY ROLE OF THIS U.N. COMMISSION."

(EDITOR'S NOTE: ACCOUNTS OF THIS INTERVIEW HAVE NOT YET BEEN MONITORED FROM SAIGON RADIO NOR HAVE ANY APPEARED IN THE VERNACULAR PRESS OR THE VIETNAM PRESS BULLETIN.)

(ENDALL)

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